Turncoat

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A few days before the Metropolitan Municipal Council meeting, a large rally was held in City Square, attended by the main opposition leader. This rally, held under the slogan "The Nation Stands Up for Its Will," was organized as a reaction to the shocking developments following the Metropolitan Mayor's resignation from his party and his transfer to the ruling party.

The rally's primary purpose was to protest the political situation that emerged after the mayor switched parties and to demonstrate voters' reactions to this decision. The main opposition leader, in his speech at the rally, described this as "political snatching," emphasizing that the people's votes are not spoils of war, but a trust. He used harsh terms like "political pickpocket" and "political snatcher" against the mayor. In his speech, he emphasized that this decision was not just a disrespect for one person's will, but for the will of the people.

The rally, which turned into a show of force, was attended by the party leader, members of the city's provincial and district organizations, members of parliament, party leaders from surrounding provinces, and numerous citizens. A large crowd formed in City Square, where slogans were chanted expressing their reaction to the resignation of the female mayor.

I don't think the female mayor was in town at the time of the rally. However, I wonder if she must have watched this rally on TV or YouTube and what kind of emotions she experienced. Every chant, every slogan, is like a bitter echo of the songs she once sang. The crowd, the same crowd that once cheered her. The faces are familiar. Now, instead of the fervent love she once felt, there are sharp shadows of disappointment

on those faces. It pains her to see these familiar faces filled with anger and sadness. As the rally's fervor grows, she sees the distance between her and the screen become more palpable. It's as if this void is separating her forever from the world she once belonged to. She acutely feels the despair of this loneliness that is the price of her decision, and the loss of all hope for the future.

The names used by the opposition for their own mayors who resigned and joined the ruling party were generally expressions containing critical and political references. Such names were used both to convey a message to the public and to emphasize internal party discipline and loyalty. As if playing a game, everyone around the table took turns saying an adjective for the female Mayor:

- Transfer Mayor,
- Badge Mayor,
- Traitor to the Cause,
- Lost his way,
- Surrendered to the Authority,
- Trustee Spirit

Our old teacher, in his usual spot a short distance away, took his eyes off the newspaper he was reading and fixed them on us. When we noticed him, we fell silent, as if we had committed a crime. However, unexpectedly, he also got into the ball

-Turncoat.

Then he rose from his seat and joined us. We were all eager to see what he would say, injecting profound meaning into the shallow politics of the day. Frankly, he consistently surprised us, but never disappointed us.

"Don't make a big deal out of this," he said in his characteristic style. He continued in a style that made it difficult to understand the "between the lines" he'd squeezed into his normal speech. "We're talking about around five hundred cases in our century-long political history colored by turncoats and traitors. Are the representatives we voted for switching parties and betraying the people who put them in that position? Then

they should hire a lawyer and prove they're not 'turncoats' or 'traitors.'"

What was clearly on my mind was this: "He's making things difficult again."

"This woman has a thousand reasons she can't even explain to herself." He meant the mayor.

A swift objection came from the person next to me. "If she won't talk, we will. She'll admit the accusations."

Our old friend's eyes were glinting with evil. "Then let me talk."

Everyone fell silent. I'm sure they were bored. After a brief silence, the lesson, which proved to be difficult, began.

“The words "turncoat" and "traitor" are often used interchangeably. However, there's an invisible line between them. A traitor consciously betrays their community, faith, or principles for personal gain. A turncoat, on the other hand, is often a figure struggling to resolve their own inner conflict. Stuck between loyalty and truth, their choice inevitably makes them a traitor in the eyes of one side.

“Perhaps a turncoat isn't someone who betrays, but someone who struggles to breathe in the foggy zone between betrayal and loyalty. A turncoat is not a simple opportunist. He's a living witness to the battle between loyalty and truth. And that's precisely where his tragic heroism lies. Whichever path he chooses, he loses. But his loss reminds society how searing, how shattering the truth can be.

“The drama of a turncoat is far deeper than the anger of society. He has lost his inner loyalty. Abandoning an idea, a belief, a path he has clung to for years is like killing an identity. A turncoat is, in fact, someone who has buried a part of himself.

Strangely, I felt as if the sentence of someone sentenced to death were being commuted to life imprisonment, or that we were moving to a point where we were 'enjoying death from death.' This is exactly what 'devil's advocate' should be like.

“The figure of the turncoat is often not only weak, but also tragic, sometimes even heroic. His return is not merely a betrayal, but a gateway to truth.

“Turncoat… This word is one of the heaviest stones in social memory. When applied to a person, it becomes a stigma that darkens their entire life, associated with disloyalty and spinelessness. Yet, isn’t ‘turncoat’ the human soul’s attempt to be honest with itself in its purest form?

One of our witty friends chimed in. “Come back, father, come back. In the nuance between the words traitor and turncoat, like a rhetorical strategy, we sensed that a small incident, so massive it was, was beginning to transform into a grand narrative.”

But our old friend remained unmoved by these challenging words and continued his lecture as if he hadn't heard them.

"The tragic hero is always caught between two poles: loyalty on one side, truth on the other. The turncoat stands in this in-between place. The conflict he feels within him is the burning tension of cognitive dissonance. To relieve this tension, he listens to his inner voice and changes direction. But from the outside, this inner courage of his is interpreted as 'betrayal.'"

"Therefore, the turncoat is actually punished twice. First, internally, because abandoning his old beliefs means alienating himself from his past. Then, publicly, because the oath of loyalty is considered broken."

“This is the essence of tragedy. The hero is caught in a predicament, faced with two choices. If he clings to his old beliefs, he denies his own truth; if he turns to the truth, he appears to have abandoned loyalty.

“This is precisely why the turncoat figure is alone. His loneliness is not that of an ordinary self-interested person, but that of a traveler shouldering the weight of truth.

This poetic style was impressive. This is acceptable. But it fueled suspicions that he had overstepped his purpose. It had a side of rhetorical excess and provoked misunderstandings. He seemed to stray from context and make excessively inappropriate or misunderstood attributions. None of the young friends could resist responding to these words. And indeed, that's what happened. "Teacher," the witty one said innocently. "If we move from the ambiguity of theory to the visibility of

truth, there are controversial procurements in municipal tenders. For example, the case of cheating. A famous person double-crossed the municipality, and by issuing an invoice."

The question referred to a heroic figure whose decaying aesthetics, concealed behind masks within the tortuous structure of time and memory, reflected the dark ambiguity of a bureaucratic and threatening universe. This man, like a common criminal, had been tried and convicted in every era. He possessed a versatility that no one could dispute. He was an expert in warfare, and he had also gained a voice in law through his training. Throughout the country's history, there were many individuals who, having attained high positions in the bureaucracy, lost the comfort of hiding behind the state in retirement and memorized the law, acting as if to defend themselves within the legal framework. One of these, while acting as a lawyer for a female mayor, had also "driven the stakes" into his own file. However, our old teacher's definition of the concept was far from complete.

“The word 'turncoat' often means, on an individual level, the restoration of internal coherence, but on a societal level, a loss of trust and disloyalty. Anger directed at the turncoatness is often a community's way of relieving its own discomfort with disharmony.

“A traitor is someone who knowingly, in pursuit of personal gain or power, sells out a person, group, or belief. A traitor violates social ties for his own benefit; he looks to his future, not his past. Loyalty is not a burden to him; it is simply a choice, and this choice always favors him. The traitor's return is an expected outcome in the eyes of society. To ostracize him, to punish him, to make him forget.

“A turncoat, however, often has a different motivation. They change direction not for personal gain, but to resolve their internal contradictions and reach the truth. The conflict between loyalty and truth drives them on this path. They tend to rationalize contradictory situations. The turncoat is loyal to their own conscience and reason, but from the outside, they appear spineless and, naturally, untrustworthy.

"Here lies the essence of tragedy. Society often brands the renegade as a traitor because change unsettles those left behind. People resent the turncoat because they force them to question their own beliefs. Cognitive dissonance resonates not only with the renegade's inner world but also with the audience.

However, all this talk of "looking at the situation from a broader perspective" wasn't going to be enough to quell the debate. Our friend, a swift dissenter, finally couldn't hold back.

"The company shares of the mayor's wife, who ended years of opposition politics, including two terms as a deputy and four as a metropolitan mayor, and then joined the ruling party, have also soared after a disastrous stock market decline.

"Eee . . .

"There's talk that the over twenty investigation files against her will be suspended, postponed, or closed with decisions of non-prosecution.

"Eee . . .

“You'll ask us whether she was a 'man for all times'—shaped by every regime—or a 'survivalist,' bent by necessity. You'll ask whether her fateful choice was driven by loyalty to her constituents, or by personal interests or security. Regardless, we're dealing with an act of undeniable treachery, even if she was under immense pressure, including the desire to protect her family and loved ones. Perhaps you'll say, 'Her decision was actually a tragic choice made under difficult circumstances.' Still, this choice makes her a completely untrustworthy and morally weak figure.

“Eee...

Our dissenting friend had, quite simply, found his voice.

"There's another point," he said. You say that anger directed at apostasy is often a community's way of relieving its own disharmony. People are angry at apostasy because it forces them to question their own beliefs. Confusion resonates not only with the apostate's inner world but also with the audience, you say. So, are people potentially guilty

This time, there was a silence unlike any I'd ever experienced before. I couldn't tell if the old man was sad. A

grim smile briefly crossed his wrinkled face, but I'm not sure. However, I cannot say that he responded in any way to the criticism made with those strong arguments.

“A politician switches parties to resolve their own internal dissonance. This action, in turn, causes voters to experience internal dissonance. The phrase "potential for apostasy" implies the fragility and volatility of human nature. For some, this might imply a weak character or morality. However, the theory explains this not as a moral weakness, but as a natural functioning of the human mind. In other words, the disturbing nature of this phrase stems from its exposure of a "human reality." Even if people don't realize they possess this potential within themselves, the confusion they experience when faced with the apostasy of others is a reflection of this reality. The theory explains that "apostasy" is not a flaw, but rather the human mind's attempt to balance itself.

"Everyone naturally encounters constant conflicts between their beliefs, thoughts, or actions in their daily lives. To resolve this internal tension, people choose to alter their beliefs, justify their behavior, or ignore the contradiction.

At that moment, I realized we had overlooked the fact that our old friend hadn't directly targeted the female president from the start. And I thought I hadn't taken this situation into account when I spoke of 'wide-angle perspective.' From the outset, it seemed he was referring to a broader scope, encompassing the turncoat.

“Expressions like, "He who holds the honey licks his finger," "The state's property is like the sea—those who don't exploit it are fools", "If someone influential intervenes, you'll have a job," "He who knows the craft, wields the sword," "He steals but works," and "Call the bear uncle until you cross the bridge" sometimes blur the boundaries of social morality, tending to legitimize self-interest, favoritism, or corruption. While such expressions have become normalized in the vernacular, upon closer examination they bear the linguistic traces of corruption. While these expressions are perceived as "pragmatic wisdom" by the public, they actually point to areas where social values have eroded. They are presented as if

"morality" were a luxury and "vigilance" a necessity. While sometimes used humorously or ironically, such expressions carry the potential to rationalize moral decay.

Just when we were wondering when the time would come, he finally passed into history.

"In the works of Nizam al-Mulk and Machiavelli, it can be said that pushing moral boundaries or pragmatic/strategic behaviors for rulers are legitimized in certain situations. In literary terms, the tension between power and virtue is perpetuated by a universal paradox of governance. Power can instrumentalize virtue, while virtue can limit power. This paradox is not a temporary contradiction; it is a rift inherent in governance. Perhaps this rift is the fine line between the ruler's conscience and the people's peace. This conflict cannot be resolved, but it can be understood. Government dances with this tension; it does not suppress it, it shapes it."

“Returning to The Prince and the Siyasetname, these works contain approaches that rationalize compromising ethical principles for the preservation of governance and power, and this can be reconciled with the tendency of sayings like "He who handles honey licks his finger" or "War is deceit" to rationalize moral corruption. Nizam al-Mulk argues that the ruler can make harsh, even sometimes brutal, decisions to maintain state stability and order. Methods such as deception, espionage, or punishment are recommended to suppress rebellions or ensure state security. This parallels the hadith "War is deceit"; strategic deception can be seen as legitimate in statecraft. While morally questionable, this is rationalized for the state's survival. Rather than legitimizing moral corruption entirely, it suggests that ethical boundaries can be stretched for the state's greater good. However, Nizam al-Mulk's effort to maintain moral boundaries places this legitimization in a more limited context.

I've long known that he had a particular interest in the "philosophy of the state," and I think it's time to share it.

“Machiavelli, on the other hand, is more explicit and radical in his rationalization of moral corruption than in the Siyasetname. Methods such as lying, deception, and even

murder are considered legitimate if they ensure the survival of the state or the ruler. Machiavelli's work clearly reveals a universal tendency to rationalize moral corruption. The bending of ethical rules in the struggle for power is considered not unique to Italy but a universal feature of human nature and politics.

“In Nizam al-Mulk, moral corruption is rationalized only for the greater good of the state and under specific circumstances. Machiavelli, however, takes a more secular and radical approach, placing moral principles almost entirely at the service of power. People tend to rationalize unethical behavior as a strategic necessity, especially in high-stakes situations such as power or survival. The Siyasetname and The Prince legitimize moral corruption for rulers in specific circumstances, in line with the spirit of sayings such as "war is fraud." The Siyasetname offers a more limited legitimation within the framework of Islamic morality, while The Prince exhibits a more open and universal pragmatism. Both works, paralleling proverbs across cultures, reflect a universal truth of human nature and politics: Power and survival can rationalize stretching moral boundaries.

For some reason, we realized we had been holding our breath when we gasped for air. An incomprehensible distress overtook us. It was as if time had stopped. The historical journey our old friend had taken us on continued.

“However, things are a little different in the Far East. There, the idea that "If the ruler is righteous, everything will be in order without his commanding." This belief, rather than legitimizing moral corruption, centers on the ruler's moral integrity. Therefore, a mentality that rationalizes personal gain, such as "the one who holds the honey licks his finger," is unacceptable in Confucian ethics. Flexibility and acting according to circumstances are implied, but this flexibility does not legitimize deviation from moral principles.

“Ibn Khaldun also does not legitimize moral corruption; on the contrary, he criticizes it as a cause of state weakening. In his view, when rulers exploit the people for their personal gain or act unjustly, this leads to the collapse of the state. As stated in

the Muqaddimah, when rulers increase taxes or exploit the people, while providing short-term gain, it leads to the collapse of the state in the long run. This is a warning against rationalizing moral corruption.

Our old friend finally did what he did and brought Roman law, which he hadn't touched upon, into the picture.

“In Roman law, and legal systems in general, examples and sayings can be found that point to the concept of "the law of the superior," which can be considered a further step in moral decay. Despite being one of the most influential legal systems in history, Roman law, in its application and interpretation, often tended to protect the interests of the powerful or the elite. In its application, Roman law frequently reflected inequalities based on social hierarchy and power dynamics. While offering equality in theory, in practice, the rich could escape with fines, while the poor faced physical punishment. This reflects a similar understanding to sayings like "he who pays the piper calls the tune."

“In Rome, judges and lawyers could often prioritize the interests of the elite when interpreting the law. For example, as Cicero noted in some cases, bribery and political influence could influence legal decisions. This is reflected in Roman law in sayings such as "everyone has their price." Especially in the late Republic and Empire, examples of corruption in the application of law were common. Powerful families or the emperor's inner circle could manipulate the law for their own benefit.

I never would have thought a female mayor would bring us to Roman law. From where to where...

“Although Roman law theoretically espoused the ideals of equality and justice, in practice, its tendency to protect the interests of elites and the powerful reflected a universal tendency to rationalize moral decay. This tendency parallels the pragmatism for the survival of the state in the Siyasetname, the permissibility of all means for power in the Prince, and Ibn Khaldun's analyses of the decay and decline of the state through the weakening of solidarity, loyalty, and collective

consciousness among members of society. When law in Rome became a tool in the hands of the powerful, it could function as the "law of the superior," an extension of cultural decay in the legal realm.

“In Roman law, practices and sayings reflecting the "law of the superior" are manifestations in the legal realm of a universal tendency to rationalize moral corruption. While Roman law theoretically advocates ideals of justice, in practice, its tendency to protect elite interests can be seen as an extension of cultural corruption in the legal realm. Practices such as the "law of the superior" in Roman law are part of a universal tendency to rationalize moral corruption; this fact is evident in the historical and sociological context. Situations where the law works in favor of the powerful share the same pragmatic spirit as sayings like "He who holds the honey licks his finger." Power, interest, and opportunity can legitimize the stretching of moral boundaries. This is a fact of human nature and social order.

The wise old man, with his final words, laid out the picture in a way that allowed us to see its place within the larger picture.

"Psychological and sociological theory explains this confusion, this mental dissonance, solely in terms of its functioning, without attributing value judgments such as good or bad to it. Law, indirectly concerning us in this matter, addresses the law of superiority in relation to the structure of society and based on rules. Philosophy reveals the reality of this dissonance occurring always and everywhere. Religion allows partial permission for this phenomenon in limited circumstances. Ethics, on the other hand, points out that it should not exist."

After all that confusion, what happened? Just a day or two later, we were back at the beginning of the debate. In other words, we descended from the ivory tower into the marketplace and mingled with the public.

The female mayor arrived at her first council meeting wearing her new party badge with two security guards and 40 police officers. The police were present in the council chamber throughout the meeting. The female mayor did not allow her former party group to speak, which had now moved into opposition. Tensions were high in the chamber.

"I demand that it be recorded in the minutes. You must give me your word."

"If anyone shouts, I will take them outside. I warn you. No shouting."

"May I speak?"

"No, you cannot."

Before the council meeting to be chaired by the female metropolitan mayor who joined the ruling party, there were police in front of the city hall and police barriers inside the municipality. A scuffle broke out at the entrance to the meeting hall.

The female mayor entered the city council chambers with her security guards. Two security guards were immediately behind her throughout the meeting. The uniformed police officers never left the council chambers.

-Can I speak?

-No, you cannot. We are here to serve. I will not allow anyone to disrupt the order.

-As the Deputy Chair of the City Council Group, you must speak to me on behalf of the group.

-This is my first warning. I will take you out.

The female mayor persistently refused to speak to the current opposition group, her former supporters. However, every item she voted on was rejected by the opposition group.

-I submit it to the Planning and Public Works Commission for your vote. Those in favor or not.

-We reject it. As a group.

- Your rejection is not valid.

-How?

-The second item on the agenda. Those in favor or not, it has been accepted.

The mayor's words to the opposition group: "Your denial votes are not valid." Immediately after joining the ruling party, she signed an 850 million lira loan with the Iller Bank and shared a photo of it on social media. That loan was also rejected by the city council.

-We will build a bridge intersection. The cost of this will be 850 million lira. We will request a loan from the Iller Bank. Those who agree or disagree... -Let the denial vote be recorded in the minutes. -Don't speak without giving the floor, I'll take you out. -You have to give me your word. Go ahead. You can take me out, consider me in the minutes. I have something to say. -No, you're not, I'll close the meeting and leave.

The female mayor did as she said and closed the council meeting, where she arrived with the police, without addressing the opposition group.

Suluova

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